**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A proximity warning system for a fireplace, the system comprising:

a monitor module coupled to the fireplace, wherein the monitor module is configured to sense when an object enters a defined zone proximate to the fireplace; and

an alarm module coupled to the monitor module to generate an alarm when the monitor module senses that the object has entered the defined zone.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the monitor module uses capacitance to sense when the object has entered the defined zone.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the monitor module uses infrared light to sense when the object has entered the defined zone.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the system is configured to automatically turn on when the fireplace reaches a given temperature.

5. The system of claim 1, where the system includes a plurality of monitor modules coupled to the fireplace.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the alarm varies in intensity depending on a distance within the defined zone between the object and the fireplace.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the alarm is audible.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein the alarm is visual.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein the monitor module and the alarm module are implemented as a single module.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein a size of the defined zone can be varied.

11. A fireplace including a proximity warning system, the fireplace comprising:

an enclosure defining a combustion chamber and including at least one exposed surface;

a plate coupled to the at least one exposed surface, wherein the plate includes a conductive area forming a first capacitor;

a capacitance module, wherein the capacitance module is electrically coupled to the conductive area and includes a second capacitor that is tunable to match a capacitance of the first capacitor; and

an alarm module electrically coupled to the capacitance module to generate an alarm when an object enters a defined zone proximate the fireplace and thereby cause the capacitance of the first capacitor to vary with respect to a capacitance of the second capacitor.

12. The fireplace of claim 11, wherein the fireplace includes a plurality of exposed surfaces and a plurality of plates coupled to the plurality of exposed surfaces.

13. The fireplace of claim 11, wherein the system is configured to automatically turn on when the fireplace reaches a given temperature.

14. The fireplace of claim 11, wherein the alarm is audible.

15. A fireplace including a proximity warning system, the fireplace comprising:

an enclosure defining a combustion chamber and including at least one exposed surface;

an infrared light module for transmitting infrared light;

a receiver module configured to receive reflected infrared light; and

an alarm module coupled to the receiver module to generate an alarm when an object enters a defined zone proximate the fireplace and thereby causes the infrared light to reflect toward the receiver module.

16. A proximity warning system for a fireplace, the system comprising:

a means for sensing when an object enters a defined zone proximate to the fireplace; and

a means for alarming when the object enters the defined zone.

17. A method for warning when an object approaches a fireplace, the method comprising steps of:

providing a monitor module for monitoring when an object enters a defined zone proximate the fireplace;

providing an alarm module coupled to the monitor module for generating an alarm when the object enters the defined zone;

monitoring the defined zone; and

generating an alarm when the object enters the defined zone.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the monitoring step includes steps of:

matching a first capacitance with a second capacitance;

measuring when the first capacitance varies with respect to the second capacitance; and

changing a voltage output based on variance in the first and second capacitance.

19. The method of claim 17, wherein the monitoring step includes steps of:

transmitting infrared light; and

receiving infrared light that is reflected toward the fireplace.

20. The method of claim 17, further comprising a step of varying a size of the defined zone.

21. The method of claim 17, further comprising a step of turning on the monitor module automatically when the fireplace reaches a given temperature.

22. The method of claim 17, wherein the generating step comprises a step of sounding an audible alarm.

23 The method of claim 17 wherein the generating step comprises a step of instigating a visual alarm.